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CBS EVENING NEWS
8 July 1983

POPE/SHOOTING/ PLOT

RATHER: Good evening. This is the CBS Evening News, Dan Rather reporting. Mehmet Ali Agca was seen in public today for the first time since his 1981 conviction of trying to assassinate Pope John Paul II. And for the first time, Agca publicly said he did not act alone. Agca was taken from the Rome prison, where he's serving a life sentence, to answer police questions about the abduction of the daughter of a Vatican employee. Richard Roth reports.

ROTH: Entering police headquarters for questioning about the kidnapping of a 15-year-old girl, whom an anonymous telephone caller has said will be released only if Agca is freed, the Turkish gunman shouted he has no connection with the abduction. 'I condemn this criminal action,' he said. It was as he was being led away by the police that Agca made his dramatic public claim. 'There were,' he said, 'Bulgarian connections' to his attempted assassination of the pope. He called himself an admirer of the pope, and as he answered questions in English, he said he had received training as a terrorist in Syria and in Bulgaria. MEHMET ALI AGCA: No, I have been in Soviet Union, but doesn't matter. Soviet Union doesn't have any direct connection by the terrorists. It uses in the Middle East, Syria, in Europe, Bulgaria. I say....

ROTH: Agca spoke vaguely of having proof about the papal assassination attempt, and for the first time, publicly and directly, implicated the Bulgarians. UNIDENTIFIED VOICE: Serget Antonov? AGCA: Ah, Serget Antonov. I say Serget Antonov was with me during attempts. UNIDENTIFIED VOICE: Ayvazov? AGCA: Yes, yes, yes, Ayvazov and Kolev. They are my accomplices in this action.

ROTH: Ayvazov and Kolev were two Bulgarian embassy employees who fled Italy last year just before the arrest of the third man, Serget Antonov, a Bulgarian airline official in Rome, jailed here since last November, charged with active complicity in the 1981 attack on the pope. All have insisted they are innocent. Antonov's lawyer tonight said Agca continues to lie. Agca's appearance tonight, after just over two years in prison, was startling. His hair is now peppered with gray. He is fluent in Italian, comfortable in English. He says he has repented for shooting the pope, but while his impromptu public testimony was dramatic, it did not make the crucial question any easier for Italian authorities. If Agca is telling the truth, can it be proved? Richard Roth, CBS News, Rome.

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